

15 leading questions, and what to ask instead

Keep it beside you when you write your questions. The fix is almost always the same: ask about what already happened, in their words.

THE 4-PART TEST ANY YES? REWRITE IT.

1 Does it contain the answer?

2 Does it hint at a "right" answer?

3 Can it be answered yes or no?

4 Does it ask about the future, not the past?

1 • Questions that assume the answer

LEADING · It assumes they love it.

"How much do you love the new dashboard?"

ASK INSTEAD

"What was your experience using the dashboard?"

LEADING · It assumes there's frustration.

"What frustrates you about your reporting process?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Walk me through how you put together your last report."

LEADING · It tells them what to think.

"Why is the onboarding so confusing?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Tell me about your first week. What happened?"

2 • Pitches disguised as questions

LEADING · You're selling, not learning.

"Wouldn't it help if the tool flagged problems for you?"

ASK INSTEAD

"How do you spot problems today? What happens when you miss one?"

LEADING · It asks for a promise, not a fact.

"If we built this, you'd use it, right?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Tell me about the last time you needed to do this. What did you use?"

LEADING · It steers them to your solution.

"Would a mobile app make your job easier?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Where do you usually do this work, and what gets in the way?"

3 • Yes/no traps

LEADING · A yes hides what they understood.

"Is the pricing clear?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Tell me what you took from the pricing page."

LEADING · It invites a polite "yes."

"Did you find setup easy?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Talk me through how setup went."

LEADING · It pushes them to invent one.

"Do you have problems with your current tool?"

ASK INSTEAD

"How does your current tool fit into your week?"

4 • Questions about the future

LEADING · People guess badly about future buying.

"Would you pay for this?"

ASK INSTEAD

"What do you pay for today to solve this? When did you last decide to buy something like it?"

LEADING · You get a guess, not a habit.

"How often would you use this?"

ASK INSTEAD

"How often did you do this in the last month?"

LEADING · It rewards politeness.

"Would you recommend it to a colleague?"

ASK INSTEAD

"Have you recommended a tool to a colleague lately? What made you do it?"

5 • Nudges and narrowing

LEADING · It sets a norm to agree with.

"Most people find this step annoying. Do you?"

ASK INSTEAD

"How was this step for you?"

LEADING · It hands them your opinion.

"Don't you think the new layout is cleaner and faster?"

ASK INSTEAD

"What differences did you notice between the two layouts?"

LEADING · It closes the topic too early.

"So the real problem is speed, right?"

ASK INSTEAD

"What would you say the biggest problem is, in your own words?"